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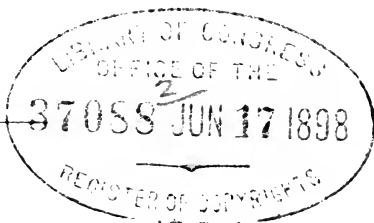
A GILDED BRICK

A Comedy in One Act

By

Willard Holcomb

W



Philadelphia

The Penn Publishing Company

1898

PC 1937
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YARROW HAT

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A Gilded Brick

CAST OF CHARACTERS

KITTIE CLAY	<i>A "gilded brick"</i>
MARIE BISQUE	<i>An heiress</i>
JOHN VAN DEVERE	<i>A real swell</i>
DICK SCHRYVER	<i>A poor author</i>
MRS. WASHINGTON	<i>A matchmaker</i>
WILLIE WASHINGTON	<i>A parlor match</i>
FLORENCE DETROP	<i>A superfluous girl</i>
JACK DOTHUNTER	<i>Hunting an heiress</i>
COUNT DE BOGUS	<i>Hunting an heiress</i>
LORD FITZNOODLE	<i>Hunting an heiress</i>

COSTUMES—MODERN

TIME IN REPRESENTATION—Forty-five minutes



A GILDED BRICK

SCENE.—*Conservatory of the Bon-Ton Hotel during a ball*—FLORENCE DETROP and JACK DOTHUNTER discovered standing, L.

FLORENCE. I don't care, Jack Dothunter, I think you have treated me just shamefully! Ever since that horrid little heiress came to the hotel you've deserted me entirely. You've been hanging after her just like all the rest of the fellows. I don't see what you find so fascinating about her; I think she is just horrid, and so do all the girls!

JACK. Now don't be hard on Miss Bisque; she's quite amusing, don't you know.

FLORENCE. Amusing? Disgusting! Why, she's positively "outré," and if it wasn't for her money she wouldn't be tolerated in polite society! Think of her dancing the "skirt dance" in the parlor—why, all the girls were shocked almost to death!

JACK. Maybe that was because they couldn't do it as well—

FLORENCE. Jack!

JACK. Oh, it isn't her fault that she is a trifle free and easy; it's her bringing up. She's as good as gold at heart.

FLORENCE. At pocket, you mean. But that's right, stick up for her, as all the men do—only let me tell you, Jack Dothunter, you're going just a little bit too far with me!

JACK. Really, Miss Detrop; I don't think you have a right to call me to account in this manner—

FLORENCE. Haven't I? Well, then, we'll just break our engagement right here, and when your heiress throws you over, where'll you be then, Mr. Dothunter?

JACK. (*aside*) That's so; I haven't got her yet, and Florrie's good second choice, even if she isn't quite so rich. (*Aloud.*) Now, Florrie, don't be foolish. You know I love you alone, and that this is only a little flirtation to fool your mother.

FLORENCE. Well, you're making it a little bit too realistic, that's all.

JACK. (*coaxingly*) Come, now, won't you forgive me?

FLORENCE. (*relenting*) Will you promise me to keep away from that Bisque girl?

JACK. Why, certainly, if you wish it; only I can't be rude to her, you know.

FLORENCE. You needn't have anything to do with her—here she comes now, with enough fools following her.

(KITTIE and MARIE appear at door, c., with several gallants following.)

JACK. I must see her a minute—to break an engagement. (*Starts.*)

FLORENCE. (*decidedly*) This is our dance, I believe, Mr. Dothunter, and the music is just started.

(JACK *reluctantly gives her his arm, and she leads him off, L.*)

KITTIE. (*at door*) You must excuse me now, gentlemen, as I have an engagement for a curtain lecture from my chaperone. (*Waves them off.*) Now, Marie, dear, we can have a moment to ourselves. Oh, did you see that Detrop girl drag Mr. Dothunter off just as we came in? She's as jealous as a cat. People say they are engaged, but he proposed to me last night.

MARIE. I don't wonder she's jealous of you, then. Did you accept him?

KITTIE. Not much! I put him on probation with the rest.

MARIE. With the rest?

KITTIE. Why, yes! Didn't I tell you? Lord Fitznoodle took me out riding this morning, you know, and between talking horse and staring at me with that glass eye—I mean eyeglass—of his, he managed to drawl out that he'd "be deuced glad to have me hitch up in double harness with him, don't ye know." (*Mimicking him.*)

MARIE. Who was the other?

KITTIE. Oh, Count de Bogus was laying for me out on the lawn after lunch. He went down on his knees and got his white trousers all over grass stains, and then he raved like a regular Italian opera lover, all about la bella luna. (*Imitates him.*)

MARIE. (*laughing*) What did you say to him?

KITTIE. I told him he was a bella lunatic and that I'd thank him to quit making a circus of himself out on the lawn, where everybody could see him.

MARIE. Well, you have been breaking hearts at a terrible rate. Now, what are you going to do with them?

KITTIE. Well, before we made this exchange of costume and name, by which I was to play the part of the rich Miss Bisque, the belle and heiress, with you in the humble rôle of my companion, you told me that there were no such things as "love" and "chivalry" in modern society; that it was all match-making and money worship. Now, I thought you had grown a little bit suspicious and cynical with too much success, so when you agreed to exchange places with me I thought I'd see for myself.

MARIE. What do you think of it now?

KITTIE. Well, I'm not so certain as I was that the life of an heiress is all roses. There's lots of spiteful little thorns among them, and, worst of all, is the thought that you are being courted only for your cash.

MARIE. That's just what I told you, but you thought it must be glorious to have gowns and jewels and flowers and fun, with never a qualm as to the cost.

KITTIE. It was awfully jolly—for a time. Didn't I create a sensation when I first came?

MARIE. You certainly did, and you've kept it up ever since.

KITTIE. Now, don't lecture me, dear. I know I've been a little too fresh sometimes, but luckily no one knows you here, and they all forgive my breaks. Whatever I do goes!

MARIE. Because "money makes the mare go," and a good many other things, too.

KITTIE. Do you really think that is the reason, that they only flatter me, because they think I have a fortune?

MARIE. Not entirely, dear, for you have a good heart and honest ways, which won me when you were yourself. But as for me, I thought long ago that my money was my chief charm, and this little masquerade of ours has convinced me. Nobody cares for me now, except as a means of getting into your good graces.

KITTIE. You poor darling! You have been most neglected, cheated out of your rights by me, an impostor. Oh, why can't they see that I'm a fraud! Does a little gilding make such a difference that common clay can't be told from real bisque?

MARIE. Never mind, dear, I'm not jealous of your triumphs. I have experienced them myself and know of their emptiness, which I am afraid you must soon learn.

KITTIE. (*sadly*) I'm afraid so, too.

MARIE. Come now, Kittie, don't be downcast. We've enjoyed this little comedy so far; let's carry it through merrily to the end.

KITTIE. That's what I'm worrying about—the end. I've played leading lady for nearly a week now, and done fairly well, but I'm getting shaky in my lines and begin to wish I were a plain soubrette again. One can cover up a break with “business” then, but this high comedy acting, before a critical audience, is an awful strain.

MARIE. Well, we must end it soon. I've just received letters from friends who are coming here to-morrow, and they'll expose our imposition immediately.

KITTIE. The sooner the better, then, but I want to put these lovers of mine to the test, and see if it's me they're after, or my supposed fortune. So I've held them all off and promised them an answer to-night here in the conservatory.

MARIE. All at the same time?

KITTIE. Yes; then I'll tell them the truth and see what they'll do. How's that for a dramatic climax?

MARIE. Quite thrilling; are there any others in the tableau?

KITTIE. Well, little Willie Wishington has been following me around all afternoon, as if he had something on the place where his mind ought to be, but he hasn't succeeded in saying anything so far, and from present indications I don't think William will be in it.

MARIE. How about Mr. Van Devere?

KITTIE. (*in confusion*) Oh, he hasn't said anything—only he has been very nice to me.

MARIE. Suppose he should propose?

KITTIE. (*quickly*) Oh, I hope he won't. I mean, Mr. Van Devere is too much of a man of the world to care for me, and he's too rich for a fortune-hunter.

MARIE. Kittie, Kittie, he's the only one of them all who has touched your heart.

KITTIE. (*sobbing*) Oh, Marie, I can't help it; but that's what makes me so miserable. I'm afraid he will despise me when he knows what a fraud I am.

MARIE. You love him, then?

KITTIE. (*softly*) I'm afraid I do.

MARIE. Poor little girl! God grant that no sorrow may come to you through this masquerade, for to me it has brought a great happiness. Hush! here comes some one.

(*Enter VAN DEVERE and DICK SCHRYVER. MARIE and KITTIE sit concealed behind a clump of palms.*)

DICK. Well, how are you enjoying yourself, old man?

VAN. Rather poorly, thanks.

DICK. Oh, you old cynic! You've been a society pet so long that you're spoiled. You don't enjoy life any more, except to laugh at it. Why, I think this the most delightful evening I ever spent!

VAN. (*nonchalantly*) Why?

DICK. Oh, the music, the flowers, the lights, the dresses—

VAN. Quite the regulation thing at most balls, I believe.

DICK. There is something more, and that's what I've dragged you off here for—to tell you in private.

VAN. What's that?

DICK. You know Miss Clay—Marie Clay?

VAN. Ah, Miss Bisque's companion?

DICK. Yes; what do you think of her?

VAN. Appears to be a very quiet, well-bred sort of girl.

DICK. (*enthusiastically*) She's an angel.

VAN. Indeed?

(*Mild sensation behind the palms—MARIE and KITTIE.*)

DICK. And she has promised to be my wife!

KITTIE. (*hugging MARIE*) Oh, you darling, why didn't you tell me!

VAN. Well, well, Schryver, congratulations, I'm sure. I think she'll make you a good one. But—what are you going to live on?

DICK. (*enthusiastically*) Love!

VAN. Very good to lend glamor to a scene like this, but scarcely strong enough to warm a house when coal is high.

DICK. I know I'm a poor devil, who ought not to think of marrying, but Marie is a sensible girl. I've told her all this, and it didn't terrify her a bit. She says there are worse things in the world than poverty, and that we'll manage to live somehow until my books begin to sell.

VAN. Very brave of her. Few girls nowadays would dare as much. My blessing on you both, my boy!

(*They shake hands. MARIE and KITTIE whisper behind the palms.*)

DICK. Well, how is it, old man; you seem to be struck on the heiress yourself. Haven't you enough money of your own, or is she a relief to these fortuneless damsels who are always throwing themselves and their families at your head?

VAN. Who said I was struck? (*Curtly.*)

DICK. Oh, nobody, but you seem to be in the chase.

VAN. I'm not in the chase!

DICK. Now, don't be uppish, old man, you know you have paid her more attention than any other girl here.

VAN. Well, maybe I have. She interests me—mildly. She's fresh and original—evidently newly transplanted from her native fields to society's hothouse, but a decided relief from the regulation heiress.

DICK. She's a regular brick!

VAN. Yes, a gold brick; and all these penniless prospectors are after her.

DICK. Do you know, I believe if it wasn't for your con-founded pride, you'd turn prospector yourself.

VAN. Hang it, man, do you want me to confess that I'm in love with her, when I haven't known her a week? I tell you, she interests me as a social study, a new specimen in this menagerie of ours.

DICK. Ha! ha! Very good; but don't get too close to the cage, or you may get caught. And if this is a menagerie, here comes the hippopotamus, Mrs. Wishington, mother of the "moon calf," the greatest curiosity ever exhibited in any show.

(Enter MRS. WASHINGTON, fat and effusive.)

MRS. WASHINGTON. What's that about a show?

DICK. *(mendaciously)* Oh, we were just talking about a new circus that's come to town.

MRS. WASHINGTON. Ah, you giddy boys! Still fond of monkeys, just like my Willie. That makes me think, you haven't seen Willie recently, have you? I've lost track of him completely, and I'm afraid he will be getting into some trouble.

(While VAN and DICK deny all knowledge of WILLIE's whereabouts, MARIE and KITTIE slip out from behind the palms and appear as if from the door at the right. MRS. WASHINGTON discovers them first.)

MRS. WASHINGTON. Ah, girls! You here?

KITTIE. *(naively)* Yes; we just came in.

(MARIE and DICK pair off, and VAN makes for KITTIE, but MRS. WASHINGTON balks his plan.)

MRS. WASHINGTON. Oh, Mr. Van Devere, would you do me the favor to look in the buffet and see if you can find Willie? I'm so nervous about him. Send him here to me, please, while I have a nice long talk with dear Miss Bisque.

(VAN *frowns and obeys reluctantly*; KITTIE *makes a face*; MARIE and DICK *smile and walk* L. Exit VAN, C., MARIE and DICK, L.)

MRS. WASHINGTON. (*embracing KITTIE*) Oh, you dear child! I've been longing for a nice, quiet chat with you all day.

KITTIE. (*half aside, but without interrupting the torrent of MRS. WASHINGTON's talk*) Sorry the desire has not been mutual.

MRS. WASHINGTON. Come right over here and sit down, dear. (*They sit* L.) Do you know, something about you reminds me of my Willie?

KITTIE. Indeed!

MRS. WASHINGTON. If only he'd been a girl. It makes me feel just like a mother to you, poor, unprotected thing.

KITTIE. Thanks. I can take care of myself.

MRS. WASHINGTON. Ah, but you need some one to warn you of the snares and pitfalls of society. Such an attractive girl as you is always pursued—

KITTIE. For her money?

MRS. WASHINGTON. Quite right, my dear, and I want to warn you right now against that Van Devere. Not but that he appears all right, but—

KITTIE. But what?

MRS. WASHINGTON. (*cautiously*) They say he has been a terrible rake in his time.

KITTIE. Who says so?

MRS. WASHINGTON. Oh, it's common report, and I myself know that he has traveled a great deal alone—something I would never think of letting my Willie do—and they say he has almost dissipated his fortune.

KITTIE. Why, I thought he was considered quite rich?

MRS. WASHINGTON. That's what they say, but you know you can't depend on all you hear. Now, it would be just like him to try to repair his shattered fortunes by marrying you.

KITTIE. Thanks, but I happen to know that Mr. Van Devere has no such intentions. Besides, I would sooner suspect him of being a victim of fortune hunters than one himself.

MRS. WASHINGTON. (*relieved*) That's so. Isn't it disgusting the way some girls throw themselves at his head? I declare, when I witness such things I'm glad that I have no daughters. Besides, he might fall in love with them, and then I should be obliged to set my face against him.

KITTIE. (*sarcastically*) Luckily he is spared that pain.

MRS. WASHINGTON. But then he's not half so bad as some others I know. There's that Lord Fitznoodle, as he calls himself, although people say he is no lord at all, but just a common horse jockey!

KITTIE. That's no disgrace among the British nobility, I believe.

MRS. WASHINGTON. Then there's Count de Bogus. He may be a Count, for all I know; Counts are dreadfully common in Italy—but, do you know, there used to be a hand-organ grinder in the city who looked just like him, and if it wasn't the Count himself, I believe it was his brother.

KITTIE. (*hotly*) Oh, Mrs. Wishington, you make me tired!

MRS. WASHINGTON. (*still smiling*) Don't say "tired," my dear, that's such a common word—say "weary."

KITTIE. Well, weary then, awfully weary!

MRS. WASHINGTON. That's just what my Willie says when I lecture him. But then you know it is a mother's duty, and I feel just like a mother to you. I've often wished I had a daughter, and if Willie ever wants a wife, I know whom I should choose. Willie admires you, too, very much.

KITTIE. (*coldly*) Highly flattered, I'm sure!

MRS. WASHINGTON. And he's such a dear good boy, Willie is—so domestic in his tastes. Ah, he'll make some girl a good husband, that I know, for I've trained him myself and never let him go anywhere without me. Oh, here he comes now!

(*Enter WILLIE WASHINGTON, a vacuous dude, slightly tipsy and confused.*)

WILLIE. Do you want me, mamma?

MRS. WASHINGTON. Yes, dearie, come right in. Miss Bisque and I have just been talking about you—now don't blush! (*to KITTIE*)—Willie is so modest, but that's a rare virtue in men nowadays.

WILLIE. (*stammering*) How de do, Miss Bisque?

KITTIE. (*calmly*) Very well, I thank you, Mr. Wishington.

MRS. WASHINGTON. Here, Willie, take my seat beside Miss Bisque. I know you have something to say to her—(*nudging him vigorously*). I'll leave you to yourselves (*departs with expressive pantomime to WILLIE*). Now be good children!

(*Exit MRS. WASHINGTON, C., triumphantly.*)

(WILLIE *edges nervously toward settee, where KITTIE sits with her back turned partly toward him.*)

WILLIE. (*aside*) Mamma told me to pop the question to her to-night, so I went down and popped a cork or two for practice, te-he! (*Giggles tipsily.*) Mamma wrote out what I was to say to her, but, by Jove, I cawn't remember a word of it! That ginger ale must have gone to my head. I've got it here, though. (*Shows paper in crown of his crush hat.*) So here goes! (*Braces up unsteadily to KITTIE.*) My dear Miss Bisque—

KITTIE. (*facing about sharply*) Well?

WILLIE. (*startled and confused*) I have long telled to wish you—I mean I have long wished to tell you (*forgets lines*)—

KITTIE. Well, now's a good time.

WILLIE. (*looking in hat*) I have longed wished to tell you of my ardent admiration for yourself and your (*forgets again*)—

KITTIE. (*suggestively*) Money?

WILLIE. Beg pawdon; nothing about money, I assure you. (*Looks in hat.*) Yourself and your transcendent beauty—transcendent beauty!

KITTIE. "Transcendent beauty" is good; go on.

WILLIE. (*reading*) I need not tell you that the Wishingtons are a proud race, dating their ancestry back to-er-er (*stuck*)—

KITTIE. The ark, perhaps. I believe Noah had specimens of all living creatures on board.

WILLIE. (*studying his hat*) I cawn't make it out, don't you know. Mamma wrote it out for me, and there's something about "being proud to link our name with yours," and "kneel," yes, "kneel," by jove! (*Kneels awkwardly in the centre of room.*)

KITTIE. Why, what is this all about, Mr. Wishington? (*Stares at him.*)

WILLIE. (*badly embarrassed*) I really don't know, don't ye know; only mamma wished me to wish you—that is, to tell you that she wished you—that I wished you to become Mrs. Wishington! (*Exhausted.*)

KITTIE. Oh, is that all? Why, I thought you were giving me a lecture on genealogy, with illustrations in pantomime. Then I am to consider this a proposal?

WILLIE. (*meekly*) Yes, ma'am, if you please.

KITTIE. Well, I can't give you an answer now; you must take your chances with the rest.

WILLIE. Beg pawdon, with the rest ?

KITTIE. Certainly ; you are not the first nor only candidate for my hand and fortune.

WILLIE. (*still more meekly*) May I get up ?

KITTIE. Yes, do. You look awfully awkward there on your knees, and it's about time the others were coming.

WILLIE. Don't I get any show, then ?

KITTIE. Certainly ; you shall have an equal chance with the others ; but I'm going to put you all to the test. Ah, here they come now !

(*JACK appears R., LORD FITZNOODLE C., and the COUNT L. All see WILLIE and each other, and hesitate to enter.*)

KITTIE. Come in, gentlemen, all of you ; I'm waiting for you.

COUNT DE BOGUS. Excuse me, Mees Bisque, but I did t'ink zat you would be by your lonesome at dees hour—

KITTIE. Oh, that's all right, Count ; come right in. I'm ready for you.

LORD FITZNOODLE. Beg pawdon, but I thought I was the only starter in this heat, don't ye know—

KITTIE. Oh, no ; there are several hot favorites, and Mr. Wishington here has just entered—at long odds. (*Turning to JACK.*) Don't go, Mr. Dothunter, I'm expecting, you, too.

JACK. (*muttering*) Some other time.

KITTIE. (*decisively*) No ; “now is the accepted time,” or rejected, as you like.

(*All enter slowly and stand about nervously. DICK and MARIE appear at door, L.*)

MARIE. May we come in ?

KITTIE. Certainly ; come in. This little affair concerns you as much as myself or any of these gentlemen.

(*DICK and MARIE enter ; suitors stand about silent and embarrassed ; as KITTIE commences to speak MRS. WISHINGTON and VAN DEVERE appear at centre door and stand listening, VAN DEVERE behind.*)

KITTIE. (*steadily*) Gentlemen, you have each done me the honor to offer your hand and name in exchange for my reputed fortune, for, in spite of your flattery, you cannot convince me that hearts enter into this transaction at all. It is purely a business matter on both sides ; my money buys your title or social position—isn't it so ? (*Mild expressions*

of deprecation and dissent all around.) Oh, yes it is. And so, before accepting any one of these proposals, I have called you all here to make a public explanation. I don't want to have you charge me afterward with obtaining a husband under false pretenses, so I tell you now that "my face is my fortune." I have no other. (*Mild sensation all around.*)

JACK. (*aside*) She's bluffing. I looked her up in Bradstreet's.

LORD FITZNOODLE. Beg pawdon, but aren't you the Bisque filly, backed by a cool million?

KITTIE. No; there stands the real Miss Bisque. (*Pointing to MARIE.*)

COUNT DE BOGUS (*excitedly*) Ah, but why dis deception? Did you not announce yourself as ze real Miss Bisque and she your companion?

KITTIE. No, sir. We simply exchanged our last names by mutual consent, and allowed you to believe what you liked. You thought me a "gold brick," but it is merely gilding. Isn't that true, Marie?

(*MARIE nods assent, at which MRS. WASHINGTON, who has been an interested listener at back, shrieks, and pretends to faint in VAN DEVERE'S arms. Great confusion; all rush toward her.*)

WILLIE. Oh! oh! mamma has fainted! Somebody get something, quick!

JACK. I'll go.

(*Exit hurriedly, R.*)

COUNT DE BOGUS. No, let me.

(*Exit L.*)

LORD FITZNOODLE. All off together.

(*Exit C.*)

(*At the denouement DICK and MARIE stop behind palms for mutual explanations, leaving KITTIE alone in the centre.*)

MRS. WASHINGTON. (*reviving*) Oh, where am I? Where's Willie? (*She braces up and glares at KITTIE.*) Oh, the shameless hussy! To think that she might have entrapped my poor Willie!

(*Exit centre, dragging WILLIE by the arm.*)

(Crushed and almost crying, KITTIE stands alone in the centre. VAN DEVERE comes slowly down to her—she hears him and turns quickly.)

KITTIE. (*sharply*) Well, what are you doing here? Why don't you run off with the rest of them?

VAN. (*slowly*) Because I want to ask you to become my wife.

KITTIE. (*surprised*) But I'm not even "a gilded brick" now; the gilding's all rubbed off. (*The last almost sadly.*)

VAN. You're a genuine brick, which is better, and I want you for my own fireside. (*Comes closer, but KITTIE draws back.*)

KITTIE. (*saucily*) Indeed! Maybe you want to make a closer study of me; I'm told I interest you—mildly. (*Mimics him.*)

VAN. (*aside*) The deuce! She must have heard me.

KITTIE. (*in the same bantering tone*) Or possibly you would like a new specimen for your own private menagerie.

VAN. (*earnestly*) Oh, Kittie, don't make a fool of me, as you did of the others. Tell me plainly, do you love me—yes or no?

(MARIE appears from behind the palms, where she has been with DICK.)

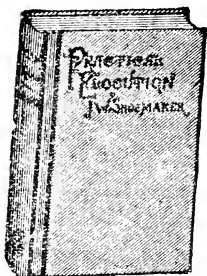
MARIE. Yes; she has confessed it to me.

VAN. My darling! (*Catches KITTIE in his arms and kisses her.*)

DICK. Ditto here. (*Hugs MARIE.*)

CURTAIN

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